

Agates: Treasures of the Earth

by Roger Pabian, with Brian Jackson,
Peter Tandy and John Cromartie

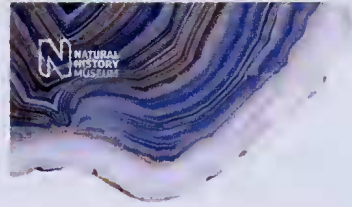
Publisher: *The Natural History Museum,*
London, 2006, 192 pages, hardback;
colour photographs.
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This new book in the Earth Series from the Natural History Museum is an extremely comprehensive, beautifully produced and illustrated book. It will surely find its way into the geological and gemstone sections of most libraries and into the personal collections of those with specialist interests in mineralogy and lapidary. The book is the latest in a series of titles that includes *Diamonds; Gemstones; Crystals; Gold; and Amber.*

The book is divided into a general discussion of agates, their naming, definition and properties, history, a larger section on the worldwide distribution and finally concluding with a section on Lapidary and the uses of agate.

Roger Pabian, the principal author, is a recently-retired agate specialist and palaeontologist from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. His co-authors come from a variety of backgrounds but all are agate specialists. They have combined to produce a book that provides a stimulating introduction to these fascinating gemstones, whilst meeting the requirements of a number of potential audiences, both professional and amateur as well as the casual reader.

For those with the grounding in geology, the technical discussion of the complexities of agate mineralogy will be informative and interesting, agate being formed by a series of very interesting geochemical processes that are clearly explained. For the wider audience, this section may appear to be too technical, but the explanations are clear and accessible. The discussion on the history, colours, occurrence, classification, and worldwide distribution of agates is of interest to both the professional and anyone interested in the beauty of this widely-distributed and historically famous mineral. It is a book that would



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particularly appeal to those with an interest in lapidary as a hobby, and casual collectors of minerals and rocks, including as it does an introduction to the preparation and presentation of agates as either specimens or as a jewellery stone.

More than 100 pages are devoted to sources of agates around the world, with the agate varieties described and illustrated from the various continents and a number of countries. The photographs of wonderful examples from each source area are incredibly beautiful and will appeal to all those who open this book, even the most casual reader. The origins, ages, types, and uniqueness of agates and the history of each agate field makes interesting reading. However, being a book that attempts to provide world coverage of agates and their distribution, it is of necessity not hugely detailed on each agate source. Consequently, if one were particularly interested in collecting Australian agates, this book would provide only a starting point in the quest of acquiring these appealing gemstones.

The book is well worth searching out if you have an interest in geology, mineralogy, gemstones, lapidary or even the art of natural photography. *Agates: Treasures of the Earth* is a worthy addition to this Natural History Museum series.

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